

NEWS RELEASE

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Workers struggling in current economic slowdown may now qualify for an extension of unemployment benefits

Sacramento - The state Employment Development Department (EDD) is moving quickly to ensure that workers who are struggling to find jobs in the slowing economy promptly receive the extended unemployment insurance (UI) benefits authorized by Congress and President Bush.

"We are sensitive to the human toll of the economic slowdown on unemployed workers and their families," said Patrick Henning, Director of the Employment Development Department. "EDD will work with unemployed persons to immediately extend this new lifeline to those who have exhausted their entitlement to regular unemployment benefits."

EDD staff has been checking records of UI claims and will contact all 1.6 million claimants potentially eligible for the new federal extension. These extensions can be filed on or after July 6, 2008.

Workers potentially eligible for extended benefits:

- Are fully or partially unemployed on or after July 6, 2008,
- Have exhausted their entitlement to a regular UI claim,
- Are not qualified to file a new regular claim,
- Have had a valid claim that began on or after May 7, 2006, and
- Meet all eligibility criteria.

Due to eligibility requirements in the federal law, some workers will not be eligible for extended benefits if they have not earned enough wages in their base periods. The workers' base period is a 12-month period of earnings used to establish a UI claim and calculate their benefit awards.

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Claimants may be eligible for up to 13 weeks of extended benefits. The amount of those weekly benefits will be equal to the amount the claimants were receiving on their original UI claim.

When individuals file for the extended benefits, EDD will provide them with claim forms for the first two weeks worth of benefits. Once claimants properly complete the forms, mail them to EDD, and meet all eligibility criteria, claimants should start receiving their benefit checks within 10 days of mailing those forms.

Workers who are collecting benefits on a regular UI claim but continue to experience difficulties in finding a new job may apply for extended benefits when they exhaust their entitlement to a regular UI claim. Extension claims must begin no later than March 22, 2009.

EDD encourages those who are out of work to apply online at www.edd.ca.gov and click on "File a Claim for Unemployment" in the middle of the page. It's the fastest and most convenient way to file for Unemployment Insurance benefits. Or you can call 1-800-300-5616. Since high call volumes are anticipated, on-line filing is strongly encouraged.

Regular unemployment benefits are funded through a state tax levied on employers. Employers also pay a federal unemployment tax to the IRS that pays for such federal extensions of UI benefits. The individual reserve accounts for each employer will not be charged for any extended benefits paid to claimants.

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